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ABSTRACT

This paper describes Bilingual-Bicultural (BiBi) instructional programs for students with hearing impairments and proposes a model for BiBi instruction which uses parents as partners with instructors to develop the linguistic abilities of hearing-impaired students. In the model, traditionally spoken languages are conveyed via cued speech instead of manually coded English (MCE) systems on the basis of three advantages of cued speech over MCE systems: (1) task differences in learning to cue or sign English; (2) how completely signs and cues convey English; and (3) the energy needed by fluent signers or cuers to convey English to children with hearing impairments. Because of their proximity to the child during the optimum language learning period (ages birth to 6), parents are described as being in the best position to serve as linguistic role models and interact naturally with the child in developing a first language. The importance of utilizing the strengths of parents to develop their child's competence in a native home language is emphasized. Contains 17 references. (CR)

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Parents as Partners for Preparing Deaf Students for Bi-Bi Educational Programs

by

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In order to realize their full potential in society, deaf and hard-of-hearing (d/hh) students in the U.S. need competence in at least two languages (i.e., ASL and English) - plus a third if the home language is neither ASL nor English). Increasingly, Bilingual-Bicultural (BiBi) instructional programs are being proposed as the best way to address the linguistic abilities of d/hh students. The most prevalent BiBi model involves promoting American Sign Language (ASL) as the d/hh child's first language, using ASL as the language of instruction, and developing English via reading and writing (Lane, Hoffmeister, & Bahan, 1996; Johnson, Liddell, & Erting, 1989; Paul & Quigley, 1990; Vernon & Andrews, 1990; Mahshie, 1995). In this paper, we propose a model for BiBi instruction which uses parents as partners with instructors to develop d/hh students' linguistic abilities.

In our BiBi model, *the language of the home* is promoted as the d/hh child's first language - which means ASL for d/hh children of deaf parents who use ASL and English or other traditionally-spoken languages for d/hh children of new-to-signing hearing parents. In our model, traditionally-spoken languages are conveyed via Cued Speech instead of manually-coded English (MCE) systems on the basis of three distinct advantages of Cued Speech over MCE systems. These advantages relate to: (1) task differences in learning to cue or sign English, (2) how completely signs and cues convey English (Metzger & Fleetwood, 1994) and (3) the energy needed by fluent signers or cuers to convey English to d/hh children.

One advantage of Cued Speech over MCE systems relates to the memory load involved in learning to sign or cue. It is estimated that the receptive vocabulary of 6-year old hearing children is 25,000 words (Shibles, 1959). To the extent that the receptive vocabulary d/hh children is that conveyed by parents and others in close proximity, parents would need to learn an average of 18-20 signs each day during the preschool years to expose the d/hh child to the same vocabulary exposed to hearing children. Further, assuming that the number of repetitions needed to instantly distinguish a single sign from all others is the same needed to distinguish a single print from of a word from all others and become a "sight word," the d/hh child would need 30-35 repetitions of the sign. Learning MCE vocabulary is obviously not a task that is mastered quickly nor with little effort for most parents; however, the importance of conveying the home language to d/hh infants immediately after birth is the same as it is for hearing infants.

The memory load involved in learning Cued Speech is significantly less than that of learning MCE systems. Learning Cued Speech involves learning 8 handshapes and 4 placements to correspond to the 44-or-so American English phonemes. Estimates of the time needed to learn the system range from 12 hours to a few weeks (Cornett & Daisey, 1992). Once Cued Speech is learned, any English word can be visually conveyed to d/hh individuals as completely as it is auditorially conveyed to hearing individuals.

A second advantage of Cued Speech over MCE systems is that Cued Speech conveys more information about English than MCE systems do - primarily, because cueing conveys *phonological information*, including prosodic information, about English which MCE systems do not (Fleetwood & Metzger, 1991, in press; Metzger, 1994). In other words, MCE signs convey nothing about the vowels and consonants in English. The ASL phonemes used to produce "bird," involving tapping the index finger and thumb together, have no relationship to b-I-r-d in English. Unless the d/hh child has the English word for bird in his head and someone makes the relationship between the sign and English word explicit, there is simply no way to make the connection with the signs. Another limitation of MCE systems relates to conveying information needed to generalize morphological rules about English. The number of ASL morphemes does not match the number of English morphemes. Cued Speech conveys the same morphemes via cues to d/hh individuals as speech conveys to hearing individuals (Metzger & Fleetwood, 1992). Further, cues convey the same phonological information about the vowels and consonants in English as speech does. This information is particularly helpful when mapping knowledge of "spoken" English to printed English - which may explain why cueing d/hh children tend to be such good readers (Wandel, 1989; Leybaert, 1993).

A third advantage of Cued Speech over MCE systems relates to the relative *complexity* of each task, in which complexity is defined in terms of the number of decisions the signer or cuer needs to make while signing or cueing.

Hearing parents who are signing English need to make translation decisions which cuers of English do not. For example, in signing the word "right," the signer needs to determine which of several signs is contextually appropriate. Cuers would cue the word the same regardless of the context in the same way that speakers would pronounce it. Further, when MCE signers cannot think of a sign for a particular English word, they need to search their sign lexicon and decide: (1) which sign in their lexicon is closest in meaning and (2) whether the receiver would prefer to have the word fingerspelled for specificity. Cuers do not need to make these decisions. The primary decision a cuer needs to make is which of 8 handshapes and 4 placements is the cue equivalent of the particular phoneme being cued. Faced with fewer decisions about what and how to convey English, cuers theoretically have more residual energy than MCE users to interact more with the d/hh child. In general, the greater the linguistic interaction between the native user of a language and a child, the greater the linguistic competence the child has with that language.

Parents, because of their proximity to the d/hh child during the optimum language learning period (0-6 years), are in the best position to serve as linguistic role models and interact naturally with the d/hh child in a way that the child develops a first language; thus, BiBi programs should utilize the strengths of parents to develop a native home language, which, for new-to-signing, hearing parents is a traditionally-spoken language. Children who come to school with a native language are in a better position to learn second and

third languages. Further, children with English as a native language, are in a better position to develop reading abilities than children without linguistic competence in English (LaSasso, 1994, 1996).

According to the Chair of the Deaf Leadership Council of the National Cued Speech Association, increasingly, d/hh adults, who have grown up cueing, are becoming active members in the Deaf Community and are strong advocates for both signing ASL and cueing English (Daniel Koo, personal communication). As we approach the 21st century, we can expect more and more hearing parents to use Cued Speech with d/hh children, resulting in larger numbers of d/hh children with native competence in English or other traditionally spoken languages entering BiBi programs. These children will be ready to develop ASL, reading, and third language abilities, so that they will realize their full potential in society.

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